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Examination of Quine's criticism on Peirce's epistemology

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Naturalizing epistemology is the central claim of Quine's epistemological investigation. In this paper, through the comparison of Quine and Peirce, I tried to evaluate Quine's epistemological naturalism. The reason why I take up Quine and Peirce is that two philosophers share the main points of epistemology, but make an excellent contrast on naturalism. That is to say, both claim epistemological fallibilism, but regarding to the result of fallibilism, both claims differ. On the one hand, Quine came to argue for naturalism, and on the other hand Peirce stubbornly rejected naturalism. Why did Peirce refuse naturalism despite of his vindication of fallibilism, and what is the point which make up the difference between Quine and Peirce? These are the questions which this paper will deal with.

In this paper, I focus on Quine's criticism on Peirce's epistemology and theory of truth. Firstly, I give an outline of Quine's naturalism and his argument for it. Secondly, I summarize the naturalistic and the anti-naturalistic aspects of Peirce's philosophy. Thirdly, I make points of Quine's criticism clear. And then finally I consider some problems that are given from the examination of these points. Points Quine criticizes are (1) a supposition of a final organon of scientific method, (2) an appeal to an infinite process, (3) a faulty use of numerical analogy in speaking of a limit of theories, (4) a supposition of the unique ideal result, (5) a problem of comparing theories in respect to degree of similarity, (6) a problem of comparing rival systems of the world for identity and difference, (7) a problem of verification of historical events. I examine these points in comparison with Peirce's arguments, and conclude that Quine's criticism doesn't sufficiently do justice to Peirce's insight, and we should appreciate Peirce's pragmatic viewpoint concerning the practice of science by the community of self-reflective inquirers.